



## *NEWS RELEASE*

### UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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#### **MEMBERS OF THE HENRY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE INDICTED ON CHARGES OF RACKETEERING CONSPIRACY, OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE, MONEY LAUNDERING, DRUG DISTRIBUTION, AND FIREARMS OFFENSES**

United States Attorney John L. Brownlee announced today that 20 defendants have been charged for their roles in a racketeering conspiracy that included the distribution of illegal drugs, theft of drugs and firearms under the custody of the Henry County Sheriff's Office, money laundering, and obstruction of justice. Thirteen of the defendants are current or former employees of the Henry County, Virginia Sheriff's Office.

A Grand Jury sitting in Abingdon, Virginia returned the 48 count indictment against the defendants on October 31, 2006.

"The members of this conspiracy took advantage of the trust placed in them as law enforcement officers. Their illegal activities included drug distribution, money laundering, and stealing property that was in the custody of the Henry County Sheriff's Office. Then, when they were confronted by investigators, the defendants lied in an attempt to hide their criminal conduct," said United States Attorney John Brownlee. "The men and women in law enforcement are respected for their bravery and commitment to service. We will not allow the

criminal activities of a small group to tarnish the honorable work that officers in this district perform each day.”

According to the indictment, since 1998, sworn officers, employees, and associates of the Henry County Sheriff’s Office engaged in a continuous scheme to steal narcotics, firearms, and other contraband from the seized evidence property room. The defendants took cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, and firearms, and then sold the stolen drugs and guns back into the community. The Grand Jury also has alleged that several of the defendants stole seized firearms and other contraband for their own personal use.

“As a public servant, I am deeply disturbed by the actions of these individuals, especially the law enforcement officers arrested today. Those who betray the public trust insult the integrity and honor of all police officers who risk their lives upholding the law. DEA joins with the Virginia State Police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Postal Inspection Service to send a clear message that their disgraceful acts will never be tolerated,” said Shawn A. Johnson, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Washington Division said.

“Police officers who believe they are above the law are acting lawlessly, and this can never be tolerated,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Charles J. Cunningham.

The Grand Jury has charged that on March 4, 2005, agents from the Philadelphia office of the Drug Enforcement Administration notified DEA agents in Roanoke, Virginia that an express mail package containing two kilograms of Ketamine was being delivered to a residence in Martinsville, Virginia. Ketamine is a sedative/date rape drug. DEA agents made a controlled delivery of the Ketamine to the Martinsville home and arrested William Randall Reed and

charged him with illegal possession with the intent to distribute Ketamine.

Reed cooperated and told investigators that the home where the drugs were delivered to was a rental property owned by James Alden Vaught, a Sergeant with the Henry County Sheriff's Office. Reed said that he paid Vaught in both cash and Ketamine to use the residence as a drug drop. Reed also said he helped Vaught sell two kilograms of cocaine that Vaught had seized from a drug dealer while on duty with the Henry County Sheriff's Office. Reed also said that Bradley Scott Martin, a Deputy with the Henry County Sheriff's Office, has been jointly using and selling Ketamine and steroids for approximately eight years.

James Alden Vaught resigned from the Henry County Sheriff's Office in March 2005 and agreed to cooperate with federal investigators in July 2005. Vaught confirmed the allegations made by William Randall Reed and also revealed that the rental property in Martinsville was used by several officers as a place for extra marital sexual relations. Vaught further stated that he, Bradley Scott Martin, and David Allen King, a vice officer and school resource officer with the Henry County Sheriff's Office, engaged in several illegal transactions involving the distribution of cocaine, crack, marijuana, and steroids.

The Grand Jury has alleged that David Allen King, who was once supervisor over the Henry County Sheriff Office's vice unit, took drugs seized by the Sheriff's Office and falsified destruction orders for the drugs. The stolen drugs were then sold to Wilbert Herman Brown, Ronald Dean Trantham, and William Randall Reed and others. It is estimated that multiple kilograms of cocaine, ounces of crack, and hundreds of pounds of marijuana were taken and re-sold for further illegal distribution in this manner.

The canine handler for the Henry County Sheriff's Office, Walter R. Hairston, would

periodically receive drugs in order to train drug smelling dogs. On approximately ten occasions, Hairston took the seized cocaine and marijuana and gave it to Vaught, who then gave it to others for further illegal distribution.

According to the indictment, Cornelia Bryant Cox, James Harold Keaton, David Allen King, and Patrick David Martin stole firearms, money, electronic equipment, illegal drugs, and other items from the evidence seized by the Henry County Sheriff's Office. It is further charged that Robert Keith Adams, Wilbert Herman Brown, Harold Franklin Cassell, Cornelia Bryant Cox, Kandy D. Hubbard Deshazo, Walter R. Hairston, James Harold Keaton, David Allan King, Steven Varion Preston, and Ronald Dean Trantham attempted to influence, impede and obstruct the federal investigation in this case by making false statements to federal agents, encouraging others to make false statements, committing perjury before a Federal Grand Jury, by passing on law enforcement information so co defendants could avoid apprehension, and by violating their oaths as law enforcement officers by ignoring illegal activities.

In 2001, a DEA agent from Texas called the Henry County Sheriff's Office to advise them that a drug ledger had been seized which indicated shipments of drugs were being delivered to a "Brad Martin's" house in Martinsville, Virginia. DEA agents in Texas did not realize that Brad Martin was a Henry County Sheriff's Deputy. Brad Martin took the call and shared this bit of information with David Allan King and James Alden Vaught. Sheriff Harold Cassell was advised of this illegal activity and chose not to take any action.

The Grand Jury has alleged that Cassell was advised of various illegal activities involving Henry County Sheriff's deputies including the distribution of two kilograms of cocaine by Vaught and others, the embezzlement of money by Vaught, and the use of steroids

by several members of the Henry County Sheriff's Office. Cassell covered up these illegal activities in several ways; by not pursuing investigations and by agreeing to pass on any law enforcement information to the offending parties so they could avoid apprehension, by making false statements to federal investigators and by attempting to aid James Alden Vaught in a money laundering scheme to disguise the source of money represented to have been derived from the distribution of cocaine. Specifically, the Grand Jury has alleged that on February 24, 2006, Sheriff Harold Cassell attempted to help Vaught give \$10,000 of known drug proceeds the appearance of legitimacy by cosigning for a loan for Vaught. Cassell then counseled Vaught to deposit small amounts of cash into a checking account to pay off the loan. In addition, the Grand Jury alleges that Cassell agreed with Vaught never to mention the existence of the money derived from illegal drug distribution and then lied to investigators, saying he knew nothing about Vaught's illegal drug activities.

The case was investigated by The Virginia State Police, The Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Postal Inspection Service. Criminal Chief Thomas J. Bondurant and Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Bassford will prosecute the case.

A Grand Jury indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are entitled to a fair trial with the burden on the government to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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